

to a person who has nearly finished an irreligious life, What would have been justly thought of you, if you could have been habitually in the society of the wisest and best men on earth, and have acquired no degree of conformity ; much more, if you could all the while have acquired progressively the meanness, prejudices, follies, and vices, of the lowest society with which you might have been at intervals thrown in unavoidable contact ? You might have been asked how *that* was possible. But then through what fatality have you been able, during so many years spent in the presence of a God, to continue even to this hour as clear of all signs of assimilation or impression as if the Deity were but a poetical fiction, or an idol in some temple of Asia ?—Evidently, as the immediate cause, through want of thought concerning him.

And why did you not think of him ? Did a most solemn thought of him never *once* penetrate your soul, while admitting it true that there is such a Being ? If it never did, what is reason, what is mind, what is man ? If it did once, how could its effects stop there ? How could a deep thought on so transcendent a subject, fail to impose on the mind a permanent necessity of frequently recalling it; as some awful or magnificent spectacle would haunt you with a long recurrence of its image, even were the spectacle itself seen no more ?

Why did you not think of him ? How could you estimate so meanly your mind with all its capacities, as to feel no regret that an endless series of trifles should seize, and occupy as their right, all your thoughts, and deny them both the liberty and the ambition of going on to the greatest Object ? How, while called to the contemplations which absorb the spirits of Heaven, could you be so patient of the task of counting the flies of a summer's day ?

Why did you not think of him ? You knew yourself to be in the hands of some Being from whose power you could not be withdrawn; was it not an equal defect of curiosity and prudence to indulge a careless confidence that sought no acquaintance with his nature, as regarded in itself and in its aspect on his creatures ; nor ever anxiously inquired what conduct should be observed toward him, and what expecta- \* tions might be entertained from him ? You would have been alarmed to have felt yourself in the power of a mysterious-